

*Welch retrofit program gains momentum, is included in Senate climate change bill*

Congressman Peter Welch hailed a plan unveiled Monday by Vice President Joe Biden to commit the federal government to retrofitting the nation's homes in order to make them more energy efficient.

The Recovery Through Retrofit Report, a multi-agency effort led by the White House Council on Environmental Quality, outlines steps the federal government can take to promote energy efficiency using existing authority and funding.

The report, released this morning, echoes arguments Welch has made in pushing for a national energy efficiency retrofit program: that investing in efficiency creates jobs, reduces energy bills and cuts greenhouse gas emissions. The report comes shortly after Welch's Retrofit for Energy and Environmental Performance (REEP) program was incorporated into the Senate version of climate change legislation.

"Vice President Biden understands the potential that home energy efficiency retrofits will bring to our economy – both in jobs created and energy bills reduced," Welch said. "The practical steps outlined in this report show what can be achieved right away using existing resources. As we move to implement these recommendations, we must continue to push for comprehensive energy legislation to increase our investment in efficiency."

The Biden report recognizes the need to provide better information to consumers considering retrofitting their homes, financing options to encourage upfront investment and training for skilled workers and entrepreneurs. The report calls for standardized performance measures and labels – like Energy Star – for existing homes. It seeks to promote financing options like state revolving loan funds, energy efficient mortgages and municipal energy financing. And it promotes workforce certifications and training standards to promote and expand green jobs.

Welch's REEP program is a national energy efficiency retrofit initiative that would provide financial incentives to homeowners and businesses that reduce their energy use by investing in efficiency. Originally introduced as a stand-alone bill in March (H.R. 1778), REEP was

incorporated into the American Clean Energy and Security Act (H.R. 2454), which passed the House in June. REEP was subsequently included in the Senate version of the bill (S. 1733), which was unveiled two weeks ago by Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) and Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.).